

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RECORD FOR STEWARTIA

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A population of *Stewartia ovata* (Cav). Weath.¹ is on both sides of the Colonial National Historical Parkway south of Williamsburg, Virginia, from the site of William Parks' paper mill² to College (Archers Hope) Creek³, a distance of about two miles. The plant most likely occurs also to the west of College Creek. As early as 1637 the whole area was being patented and cleared; it now supports a relatively young woods of mixed composition of which in various places *Stewartia* is a striking member. Some individual trees of the genus there reach a height of fifteen feet. Flowers are white, with purple, rose, or yellow filaments (*Baldwin 14951*, GH). Because the stamens are numerous, differences in flower colors are marked.

This population of *Stewartia ovata* is well-known (Grimes, 1922; Kobuski, 1951; Coe, 1959; Harley, 1961; Massey, 1961; Harvill, 1965), but for a second Coastal Plain station in Virginia, in Lancaster County, there is a single report (Harley, 1961). Otherwise, records are for the mountains, hence the name Mountain-Camellia.

We now learn that The Reverend Mr. John Clayton (1657-1725) found the Archers Hope plant in the seven-

¹Weatherby (1939) explains that the long-accepted *Stewartia pentagyna* L'Hér. is invalid and that the combination given is necessary.

²The mill, dating from 1744, not only supplied the needs of William Parks in Williamsburg but also those of other printers including Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia.

³The colonists landed at the mouth of this creek on May 12, 1607, and proceeded upriver the next day to establish Jamestown. Captain Gabriel Archer advocated settlement at the creek but was outvoted. For more than a century thereafter the creek was known as Archers Hope and was then named for the College of William and Mary. With transfer of the Capital to Williamsburg in 1699 Archer's judgment was vindicated, and just as his creek afforded an approach from the James River to Williamsburg so did Queen's Creek from the York. For a time consideration was given to the construction of a canal to join the two creeks.

teenth century. He arrived in Virginia in May of 1684 to be rector of James City Parish; in May of 1686 he sailed for England, "taking with him some drawings of plants, probably some collections, and certainly a vast fund of information" (Berkeley and Berkeley, 1965). Thereafter he pursued his ministerial work in England and Ireland and followed his natural bent for things scientific. In 1687, in a long letter to Robert Boyle, Clayton wrote an "Account of Virginia", which is a delight to read (Berkeley and Berkeley, 1968); therein, after a picturesque and accurate description of the flowering dogwood, he stated: "I remember near the place caled Coll. Bacons Landing, over agst Archers hope [See Figure 1.], I found a Shrub had a flower like the false flour of this dogg tree only it was a pentape-

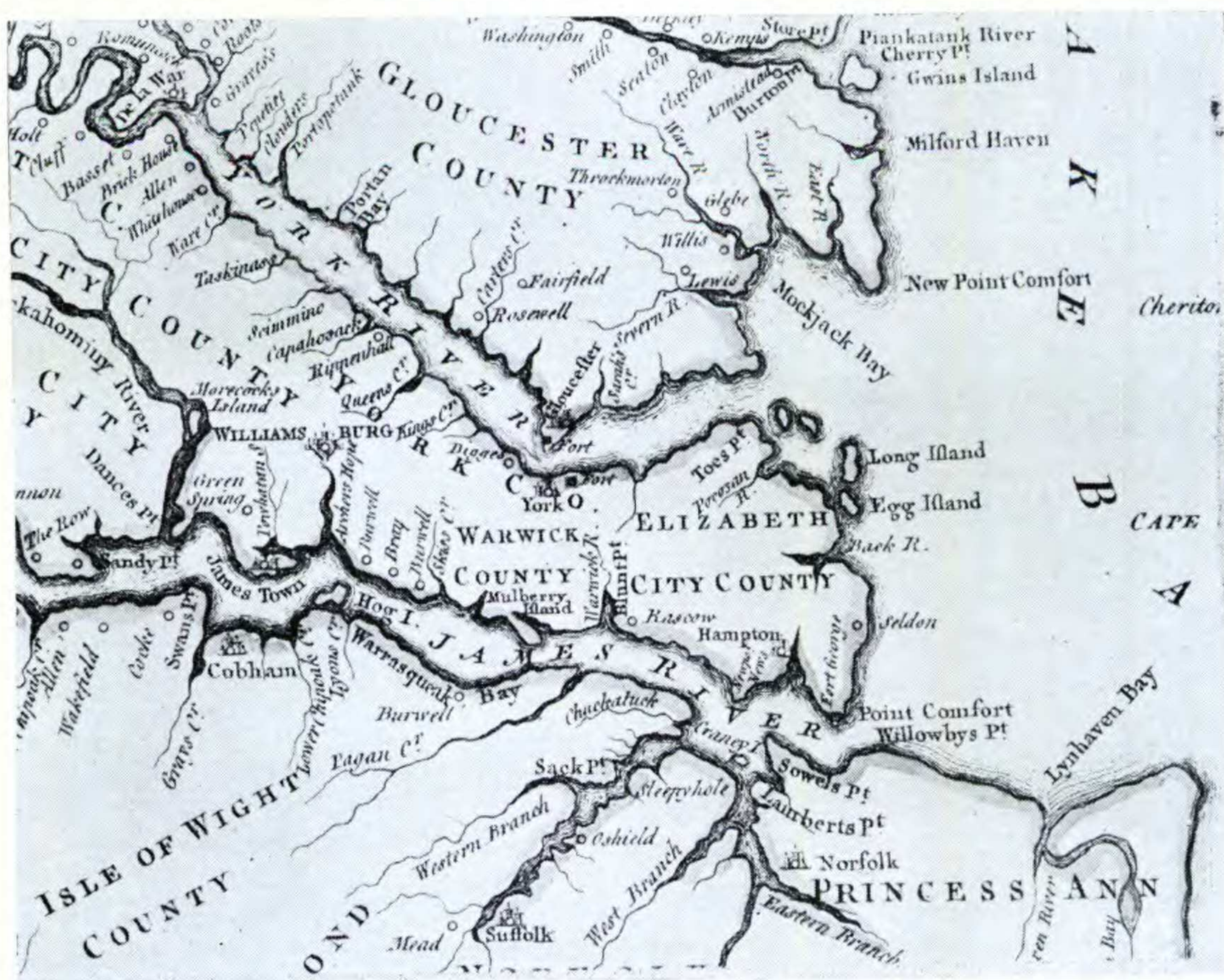


Figure 1. Portion of the 1751 Fry and Jefferson map of Virginia, taken from the facsimile, 2nd ed., Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1966.



Figure 2. *Stewartia ovata* from the Archers Hope population as drawn by Frances Dayton, 1956.

talon, the Dogg tree flower being as I s'd a tetrapetalon, afterwards comeing that way, I went to see wt fruit it bear, they were not nere ripe, but were about the bignesse of a Walnut, & had 5 ridges ran down the fruit, winged, How bigg they might grow I know not"

The reverend gentleman was, of course, recording observations on the plant that exactly one hundred years later Cavanilles was to describe as *Malachodendron ovatum*. Compare Clayton's description with the drawings made by Frances Dayton of specimens taken in 1956 from the location visited by the rector in 1685: flowering, June 29; fruiting, July 29 (Figure 2). The letter quoted above was written fifty-four years before Linnaeus described *Stewartia*, sixty-one years before John Mitchell published *Malachodendron*, sixty-six years before Linnaeus (in *Species Plantarum*, 1753) made the combination *Stewartia Malachodendron* (type species), two hundred thirty-four years before Grimes collected specimens at approximately the same place (*Grimes 3818*, NY: in flower, June 24, 1921; on dry wooded slope along tributary of College Creek south of Williamsburg).

Clayton associated in his memory the plants that came to be named *Cornus florida* and *Stewartia ovata*. Interesting it is, therefore, that the country people in the environs of Williamsburg sometimes call *Stewartia* as they find it in the woods Summer Dogwood (so reported to me by J. B. Brouwers, former Landscape Superintendent of Colonial Williamsburg who transplanted specimens from the wild into town).

Though only two species of *Stewartia* occur in the United States — about six in Asia, the American representatives have a complex taxonomic history (Fernald, 1936) which, I suspect, needs further clarification. John Clayton (1686-1773), the botanist, sent dried specimens of *Stewartia* to Gronovius in Holland and at least one living plant to Marc Catesby in England. Clayton collected in areas where we now know only *S. ovata* and not *S. Malachodendron*, though in the years that have intervened since Clayton arrived in Virginia in 1705 many Coastal Plain populations of either or both species might have been completely destroyed. But we do know from the Archers Hope stand that *Stewartia* does have survival persistence even in an agricultural area. Fernald seemed to be under the impression that Clayton

sent back specimens only of *S. Malachodendron*: I question that. John Mitchell wrote a letter to Marc Cateby (*Natural History of Carolina*, etc.) with the important statement: "There are five styles, as I showed you in a specimen I have." Mitchell was at the time discussing his genus *Malachodendron*, whence Linnaeus took the specific epithet. Nowadays, *S. ovata* is considered to be unique in having five styles.

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